

something about bases by qianwanshi

Series: [bad first date \[2\]](#)

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti)

Genre: Eddie Kaspbrak's Shorts, Everyone's alive, M/M, Richie Tozier is a Deeply Embarrassing person, Self Confidence Issues, Still, big emotions richie, idiots having mature adult conversations, intimacy issues, it's just gonna take a minute to get there, no clown au, we gonna get horny with this one boys

Language: English

Characters: Beverly Marsh, Eddie Kaspbrak, Richie Tozier, Stanley Urís

Relationships: Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier, Patricia Blum Urís/Stanley Urís

Status: Completed

Published: 2019-11-14

Updated: 2019-12-09

Packaged: 2019-12-16 17:06:17

Rating: Explicit

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 4

Words: 20,342

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

“Hey, Eddie.” He swallows, all of the saliva in his mouth has gone tacky with sudden anxiety. He doesn’t know if he’s talking more to Eddie or himself when he continues. “Don’t freak out.”

“Richie?”

“You should come stay with me.” There, it’s out there. He feels better for all of half a second before he realizes he was kind of vague and it kind of sounds like he’s inviting Eddie to move in with him. “I mean, just until your train situation is better.”

“Um,” Eddie says.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

I sat down to continue this bad first date au like "this one's gonna be horny" and then immediately I vomited out 3k of richie emotionally contemplating how much he likes eddie like???? the absolute betrayal.

Then I hit 10k before getting even remotely horny and I had to admit to myself that this bad boy is gonna have chapters, so here we are.

ALSO this is set in nyc and I know nothing about nyc but i am trying. every fic i write after this one will be set in my city solely so I don't have to google desperately quite so often. I think I looked up a picture of the nyc subway map roughly 6 million times writing this.

also also it is some like 30s people living in nyc but it is not a friends au bc friends is shit and that's a hill I WILL die on

Early into the new year, a sizeable chunk of Eddie's train line has to be shut down. Some kind of electrical fire or underlying structural damage, no one seems to really know the full story, but it's going to be a while before it gets back up and running, apparently. This, right after the identification of the e-brake bandit as they named him, is almost too much for Eddie to take.

"Can I not just fucking go to work?" Eddie rambles grumpily on the phone one night.

He won't admit it, but having to go out of his way for his commute twice a day is starting to take a toll on him. He's getting up extra early and getting home extra late, walking through some kind of unsafe streets looking small and muggable. He's even more tired than normal, Richie has seen his darkening eye bags on their facetime

calls, and Eddie had almost passed out against his side the last time they rode a train together on a date. (Which would have been awesome, obviously, if it wasn't super concerning).

With him being extra tired comes him being extra grumpy.

So he doesn't take it particularly well when Richie laughs and says, "that's what you get for living all the way out in Bushwick, you fuckin' hipster."

His yelling "Fuck you, dude!" isn't an immediate cause for alarm, they actually use the phrase between them pretty frequently for people who are dating and allegedly like each other. When he hangs up a second later, though, that's actually kind of worrying.

Richie silently freaks out for a minute, not knowing what he's supposed to do in this situation. He's pissed people off before, obviously, like, look at him and his entire existence, of course he has. What he hasn't done, though, is piss off Eddie. Not beyond the realm of playful annoyance, anyway.

He opens his texts and starts to type, taking just a second to look over their last messages. Eddie had sent him a picture of a to-go coffee cup in his hand that read 'Baby Skips' followed by roughly 15 question marks. He mourns that he's ruined this with his stupid mouth.

'hey sorry i hope we're cool...'

He stops and deletes.

'that wasnt funny sorry...'

He deletes again.

'please don't be mad, i really like you and i don't want to mess this up-'

This time, in the middle of his typing, he's interrupted by his phone vibrating and lighting up with a picture of Eddie he'd taken while they were out one afternoon. (Eddie in his expensive looking peacoat and soft looking winter hat, smile on his face and cheeks and nose red. Richie loves it.)

He answers faster than he's ever answered a phone in his life. "Eddie?"

"I'm sorry." Eddie sounds miserable. "That was realllling fucking uncalled for."

"Eddie." His name comes out on a sigh. Relief, gratefulness, just... happy. Not used to being the one not doing the apologizing.

"Seriously, Rich," Eddie powers through whatever Richie was building up to say. "You call me a hipster every other day, it doesn't bother me. I'm just tired and bitchy."

"Yeah, I know, Richie agrees. "But you're having a hard time, I shouldn't make fun of you for it. I'm just trying to..."

"Make me laugh," Eddie finishes for him. "I know you are, I know how you operate."

Richie has to set aside his internal panic at facing this new concept of being so *known* until he has the time for a real sit down freak out about it. Reality, meet backburner.

"You're sure?" Richie asks, not entirely trusting that the conversation is real.

"I'm sure, I'm not mad at you I'm just..." Eddie sighs into the phone and Richie knows what's coming. He uses the word frequently on Eddie and he hates it, he says it makes him sound like a toddler. (Then gets mad when Richie says he's seen a few toddlers his height.) "Grumpy."

Richie grins knowing how much Eddie has to have struggled to allow himself to admit he's grumpy.

"Hey Eds," Richie whispers for no real reason other than it's night. He's in bed, Eddie presumably is too, if he whispers he can pretend they're next to each other.

"Yeah?"

"Get some sleep."

“Okay.” Eddie sounds as relieved as Richie feels. “You too.”

Xxxx

On Tuesday Eddie doesn't pick up for their routine lunch hour phone call. Nor does he respond when Richie texts him to ask if he's okay. It's not unheard of for Eddie to get dragged into impromptu meetings or pressured into grabbing lunch with a coworker, so he doesn't panic about it. And he only mopes a little bit, really, because very recently Richie has started to end their phone calls with “ok I like you, bye” and hearing Eddie's flustered “yeah, me too, bye” warms his shriveled little heart every single time.

When Eddie doesn't text him back after ten minutes (and that's practicing extreme restraint), Richie texts him again.

‘You're probably busy’

‘call later!’

‘ok I like you bye’

An hour and some change later, Eddie finally texts him back.

‘I fell asleep at my desk over lunch and I'm not sure what year it is now. Sorry I missed you.’

Then,

‘And I like you, too.’

Oh, even in text form it makes Richie smile. It feels so juvenile, Eddie had even said so the first time Richie threw it out there, but they'd both not had much chance to be a little juvenile about dating when it was age appropriate so they've decided it's fine.

If Richie wants to tell Eddie he likes him (he does, *all the time*), he's going to tell him.

He texts back a series of nonsensical emojis knowing that Eddie has already set his phone back down to work and won't see them for hours.

Xxxx

Wednesday's friend dinner at Richie's place is the first one that Eddie

has been officially invited to and actually accepted. He gets in with Stan, since they left from the same place together, which is only a bummer because it means Richie doesn't get to thoroughly kiss him like he wants to at the sight of him in his business dress.

"Nice fuckin khakis," he comments. He knows he's visibly devouring Eddie with his eyes, but really those pants do a lot for his thighs and Stan can go fuck himself.

"Fuck off," Eddie responds seamlessly. He rips off his winter hat with one hand and straightens out his flattened and mussed hair with the other.

Richie makes a show of checking his phone, scrolling and zooming around.

"Stan, delivery's here, go downstairs and get it," he demands.

Stan looks up from where he's half unraveled from his long scarf, eyes wide and baffled.

Richie widens his eyes in return, looking pointedly at the door, trying very hard to convey 'fuck off for like five minutes so I can kiss my kind of uptight about pda boyfriend' using only his eyebrows.

It apparently works well enough because Stan, though making sure to roll his eyes as hard as he can, does leave to pick up their food.

"You didn't have to kick him out." Eddie blinks at the door, looking embarrassed.

"He can take it." Richie only needs a few steps to make it across his tiny cramped kitchen to Eddie's side. It takes no further encouragement than that to get Eddie's head tilted back, meeting him eagerly in what is, ultimately, a series of very rated PG kisses.

Richie leaves his arms wrapped around Eddie's shoulders when he pulls away. Takes in his tired tired face, purple bruises under his eyes, lips turned downward at the ends. When Eddie's head lolls forward, dropping against Richie's shoulder, Richie slowly curls and uncurls his fingers in the short hair at the back of Eddie's head.

“Tired?” Richie asks.

Eddie only hums his agreement, sounding relaxed. He’s warm, pressed flush against Richie’s front as he is, hands slack against his hips. It makes Richie want to call off the whole dinner and wrap Eddie up in a blanket and put him to sleep.

“Are you two decent?” Bev yells in through richie’s cracked open front door.

Eddie starts a little bit and pulls away. He blinks blearily, trying to readjust to the lighting in the kitchen.

“Never!” Richie yells back. His hands finally drop back to his sides and he feels... lonely somehow.

Bev laughs as she enters properly, Stan right behind her, both of them carrying bags of food. They unload everything onto his tiny countertops and crowd around his table which is intended, at best, for about two people. Greetings are passed around, really the first time Bev and Eddie are meeting properly. (They ran into her in the hall one weekend when they were marathoning some cheesy horror movies, but that hardly counts.)

Before eating, Eddie excuses himself to wash his hands, because of course he does. Bev leans her entire torso over the table as soon as he’s out of the room.

“He’s so much cuter in person!” She hisses at Richie.

“Yeah, no shit.” Who does she think he is that he needs to be reminded of how cute Eddie is. When Eddie returns, Richie grabs the sleeve of his dumb soft cardigan as he grabs his seat, desperate to touch. “Bev says you’re cuter in person.”

She throws a loose piece of chicken breading at Richie, eyebrows pressed together angrily.

“I just mean,” she explains. “Stan doesn’t have a great track record with picking cute guys.”

Eddie grins and glances up only briefly from where he’s dishing food

onto his own plate. “Yeah?”

Bev nods eagerly enough that it causes the curls in her hair to bounce. “We asked him to pick a hot actor and he said Mark wahlburg.”

“Stanley!” Eddie looks scandalized, frowning deeply. “Gross!”

Food gets passed around hand to hand, plates get refilled and they laugh and talk, mouths and hearts full. Except for Stan who would never talk with his mouth full of food, something even Eddie does sometimes. It feels really no different to the dinners they had before Eddie ever joined in which is the nicest part. It’s a little more crowded around the table, especially with Richie’s long legs crammed in there, but Eddie slots in like he’s always been missing. It makes Richie feel ready to burst with emotion and he jams a biscuit into his mouth so he doesn’t do something embarrassing like cry at the dinner table.

“Oh!” I got a writing job!” Richie announces through a mouthful of food when conversation hits a lull. “It’s just, like, bits here and there but I don’t have to go all the way to LA to do it.”

“That’s awesome, Rich!” Bev carefully maneuvers to fistbump Richie across the table without spilling any of their drinks.

Stan nods and says something similarly encouraging, but it gets drowned out by all the blood rushing in Richie’s ears when Eddie squeezes his knee and smiles happily at him. He carefully finishes chewing his food before offering congratulations like a normal brained human being and Richie has, he’s pretty sure, transcended to another dimension.

By the end of the meal, Eddie is yawning widely more and more frequently, and he rejects the invitation to stay after and watch a movie. He has a long way back and work in the morning, and Richie has an idea.

He stuffs it away for the time being, 50% knowing Eddie won’t like having something suddenly sprung on him 50% pure cowardice. He’ll mention it later. For now, he leaves Bev and Stan to set up their

movie nest so he can say a proper goodbye at the door. Finally getting to kiss Eddie as thoroughly as he's been wanting to all night, pushing close and nipping at his bottom lip, chasing that path with his tongue. Crowding Eddie against the door frame standing unsteady in the pile of shoes on the floor mat he'd gotten as a half hearted attempt to protect the old beat to shit wood floor.

Eddie opens for him willingly, pulling him in for only a moment before he extricates himself. His breath is a little shaky, something Richie would hold onto as a major victory if his own breath wasn't very shaky in comparison.

"I have to go," Eddie reminds him. His eyes dart over Richie's shoulder, where their friends are only a room away in Richie's tiny New York apartment.

"I know, sorry." Richie kisses the corner of his mouth, unable to resist. He buries his face in Eddie's neck. "It's the khakis."

He's only half joking, and that's a very generous half he's letting himself have.

Eddie shoves at his chest, annoyed, but not hard enough to push Richie off balance. "Shut up."

He pulls Eddie's hat on for him, down over his ears and all the way to his expressive eyebrows. Eddie reaches up from where he'd been securing his scarf to adjust it, pushing it up away from his eyes.

"Bye, Rich." Voice muffled, half his face hidden behind a scarf, Eddie's eyes are even more striking like this. Wide and shining and pretty, dark lashes drawing in Richie's gaze every time.

"Bye, Eds." Those eyes pinch and even with his mouth hidden, Richie knows he's frowning. It had taken a while for that initial conditioning to be polite to wear off, but once it did Eddie had admitted that he hates being called Eds, securing its place as a nickname for as long as Richie lives.

Bev whistles when Richie falls back onto the crowded couch and lets out a deep 'oof' when he drapes heavily over her, his legs weighing

heavily on Stan's lap. He doesn't know what movie is on, he doesn't care, he's going to float happily on his 'I get to kiss that cutie Eddie Kaspbrak sometimes' cloud for the rest of the night.

Xxxx

It's a couple days before Richie really gets the chance to spit out his brilliant idea, and only after half of a lunchtime phone call where Eddie contributes nothing more than hums and 'uh-huh's the entire time.

"Hey, Eddie." He swallows, all of the saliva in his mouth has gone tacky with sudden anxiety. He doesn't know if he's talking more to Eddie or himself when he continues. "Don't freak out."

"Richie?"

"You should come stay with me." There, it's out there. He feels better for all of half a second before he realizes he was kind of vague and it kind of sounds like he's inviting Eddie to move in with him. "I mean, just until your train situation is better."

"Um," Eddie says.

"Stan hasn't had any problems getting to work! There isn't even a transfer from our place!" Richie becomes aware that he's babbling, which effectively makes the babbling much worse. "No ulterior motives, I'll sleep on the couch. I'm not being weird- well, no, I am being weird, but that's just--"

"Richie." Eddie, god bless him and his very cute butt, interrupts.

"Yeah?" Richie squeaks like a big idiot.

"Thank you, really, but I'm fine." There are rustling noises, a sure sign that Eddie is back at his desk. "I requested some time to work from home and it should be approved soon."

"Okay." Richie tries hard to not feel rejected. He knows, factually, that that's not what this is, but that doesn't stop it from feeling like it.

"I'll see you later?"

“Yeah, see you later,” Richie confirms.

Xxxx

Sunday afternoon, Richie gets an unexpected phone call from Eddie. He sounds frazzled and angry, taking three false starts to finally spit out “those motherfuckers!” at Richie. It sends his mind hurtling toward the worst, thinking again of the dodgy roads Eddie walks through as he has been very often lately.

It has him sitting up, spine a tense straight line, from where he had been slouched back with his laptop open on his lap. “Eddie, you okay?”

Eddie sighs heavily, turning into an annoyed groan toward the end. “I’m fine. Just- Work called and they won’t approve my request until this big name account is closed which is *weeks* away and- Fuck!”

“Oh, Eds.” Richie sinks back into his old plush couch. He allows himself a brief moment to rub his hand across his eyes, coming down from the fear adrenaline that had him half ready to run out the door. “That sucks, dude, I’m sorry.”

“I’m so- I can’t believe-” Eddie sighs again. “I’m sorry, is your offer still good? I can’t do this anymore.”

Richie shoots forward in his seat again. If he has one more adrenaline shock within the next half hour his heart may actually just give out entirely.

“Yes!” Too eager, calm down. He clears his throat. “Yes, yeah, Eds. Anytime you need.”

“Can I come by tonight?”

“Yeah, of course.” Richie is already on his feet, searching frantically for his mysteriously scattered shoes. “Do you need help? I can come help you drag some of your stuff over.”

Eddie tells him which station to get off at, and much much too long later, Richie is making his way toward Eddie’s place right by his side. If he has to be completely honest, the hike from the alternate train

station Eddie's been forced into using isn't as bad as he'd been imagining it, but it's not great either, especially considering the late nights he's walking this way.

Eddie's apartment is a tall brick building, but is also like, aggressively modern inside. It's small, but not in the sort of overcrowded way that Richie's place is. Everything is squared and white and the living room holds large floor to ceiling windows and a door to a balcony.

"What the fuck," Richie asks as soon as they're in his front door. "Why are we always doing stuff at my place?"

Only sparing a quick, nonchalant glance around at the dazzlingly clean open kitchen, Eddie leads Richie farther inside. "I like your place, it's cozy."

The bedroom has much more evidence of Eddie's presence and personality than his stark kitchen and living room. His laptop is on the corner of his bed (which is neatly made), a large framed poster of some hipster music shit Richie doesn't recognize, and his bookshelf is color coded and has a small lumpy stuffed animal dog resting on top that looks very old. He pretends to be distracted reading the book titles long enough to let Eddie grab a discarded pair of boxers off of the floor and shove them into a laundry basket inside his closet, but then he turns around and tuts like he's disappointed.

"Such a slob, Eddie," he teases. "Look at this place."

Eddie is half buried in his closet, digging around, but his voice carries *just fine* when he shouts back. "I've seen what your room looks like, dick."

He emerges holding a large duffel bag and a wheeled suitcase and starts to meticulously load them both with clothes, his laptop, his pillow.

"I have pillows, you know," Richie offers.

Eddie glances at him from the corner of his eye. "Pillows you've drooled all over."

"I'm—" Richie struggles, open mouthed, to find literally anything to

say.

“Can you do me a favor and go dump my milk in the sink?” Eddie asks. “Need to toss anything about to expire.” The last part is mumbled, more to himself than to Richie like he’s mentally checklisting everything in his house he’s leaving behind.

Grateful to be handed a task other than ‘stand around uselessly until it’s time to go’, Richie gladly returns to Eddie’s kitchen to do exactly that. There’s a magnetic dry erase calendar attached to the front of the fridge that distracts him before he can even make it to the inside. It’s written on in multiple colors, each one with its own significance, Richie would put money on it if he had anyone to place a bet with.

‘Wash sheets’ is marked in red every other Tuesday.
A half formed grocery list is scribbled on the side panel in black
‘Date w Richie’ is in purple on the Friday just passed.

It makes him smile, this visible evidence that Eddie keeps track of him up here with the most important parts of his days. Work, Laundry, Food, Richie.

His eyes wander.

‘Dinner @ Richie’s’ is in purple every Wednesday.

‘Richie movie’ in purple next week.

Looking it over, the only purple across the entire board is related to Richie. He has his own *color* on Eddie’s detailed marker board calendar and the realization means so much more to him than he ever would have thought. He has to drop his forehead to the fridge door for a moment to swallow back an embarrassing wavering breath.

He grabs the purple marker from where it’s also stuck to the fridge by a little magnet and draws a dick in the corner of the calendar.

It only takes him one second to rub it away with his sleeve and replace it with a tiny purple heart. Something Eddie won’t roll his eyes at and erase straight away, he hopes.

He dumps the milk, tosses out some cheese that's a few days out to expire, and leaves everything else.

Eddie reappears, arms heavy with his bags. Richie scampers forward to take his duffel away and slings it across his body.

"Got everything?"

Eddie glances around, eyes darting hummingbird fast at everything in the room. "Almost."

He shoves a book into the side of the bag Richie is holding, jostling him as he pushes. Pats his pockets, grabs his keys, and in the last moment, grabs a leafy potted plant sitting on top of a narrow desk that Richie had assumed was fake.

"Okay, lets go." Eddie leads their way out, back to the train, back to Richie's.

Richie snaps a picture of Eddie on the train. They're sitting on opposite sides and a little ways down the car from each other, so Richie has to lean way forward to get around the person standing between them who glares like he's offended them personally. It's worth it, though, when he gets to set a picture of Eddie with a suitcase between his knees and a potted plant in his lap, eyebrows furrowed down at his own phone as his background.

It's doubly worth it when he texts the picture to Eddie and he looks up at him and mouths 'what the fuck', arms out, palms up.

They scavenge dinner out of Richie's fridge and find a comfortable place on the couch together. Richie grabs his laptop to try and work, but no words that make it to his page are any good and he ends up slamming it shut in frustration. Eddie, at some point, had gotten up to unpack his bags, padding gently around on socked feet between Richie's bedroom and bathroom. The sound of his steps is comforting, strangely, that background knowledge that he's not alone. Of knowing that Eddie isn't running off this time.

When Eddie returns with his book in hand, he's changed his clothes into a soft tshirt and pajama pants. It gets Richie to do an honest to

god double take at him and he has to physically sit on his hands to keep himself from touching. His pants look soft to the touch and are patterned with tiny French Bulldogs.

He'd promised no ulterior motives. He'd promised sleeping on the couch. He would hate himself if Eddie felt trapped here, nowhere else to go and stuck with a man who won't stop groping him.

One of Eddie's socked feet nudges against his thigh. "Are you okay?" He asks. "You're acting bizarre."

"I'm not acting bizarre. You are," Richie accuses without even knowing why he's doing it.

"I've never been in your house this long without you trying to grab my ass," Eddie says plainly.

Richie deflates back onto the cushions of his couch, collapsing under all of his self made stress like one of those oversized stars he once read about. He continues to flop, rotating until he's half draped over Eddie's bent knees.

"I just-" Richie presses his forehead hard into one of Eddie's kneecaps, both hands holding onto muscular calves. "I don't want you to feel cornered or anything."

Eddie breathes in deep and sighs Richie's name out on the exhale. One hand rises to push through his hair and tug a little, just enough to be sure he has Richie's attention. "If I was worried about you forcing me into anything, I wouldn't be here."

"I know." He knows Eddie is smart. Knows he wouldn't allow himself to be put into a position where he was uncomfortable, not ever.

"I also am dating you, voluntarily," Eddie reminds him as if Richie isn't surprised by this fact on a daily basis. "And I actually like kissing you."

Richie's shoulders shake when he laughs at that, but he really appreciates the reassurance at the same time. Something in him unwinding with each scrape of Eddie's blunt fingers scratching over the base of his skull over and over.

“And I like it when you grab me a little,” Eddie adds.

Richie’s ears burn red hot, and he’s sure it’s plainly visible, a deep, horrible blush. His heart thrums an unsteady rapid beat in his chest. He shifts just enough to peek up at Eddie over his knees and he looks... fine. His cheeks have a faint pink tinge but he meets Richie’s gaze steadily.

He pulls his right hand away from its grip on Eddie’s calf and opens his palm instead against his thigh. He feels everything through the thin thin fabric of his pajama pants; a hint of the texture of downy hair, firm musculature of someone who obviously runs, the line where his boxers end, the soft meat of his ass in Richie’s firm grip. It has Eddie grinning at him, perfect dimples making an appearance, and pulling him forward by that grip still at the back of Richie’s head.

Eddie’s legs fall aside to make room for long and lanky Richie to hover closer, straddling one thigh. He follows Eddie’s pull, unresisting, meeting in a long overdue kiss.

There’s nothing frantic or overheated about their kisses and yet somehow it’s one of the hottest things Richie has ever experienced. Eddie’s hand feels wide and strong cradling the back of his head like he’s worthy of such a gentle touch. He opens his mouth to Eddie’s tongue when his other hand comes to join the first, his thumb tracing the line of his jaw from chin to ear, palm flat against his neck, sure to feel his unsteady fluttering pulse. The touch sends a slow trail of chills unspooling down his spine. His own hand is still on Eddie’s ass, holding firm but still, like if he allows any wandering Eddie might get scared off like a wild animal.

Both of their breathing is a little ragged when Richie pulls away after several long moments of their slow back and forth, slouching impossibly further to welcome himself to the expanse of available skin on Eddie’s neck.

“If you leave a mark on my neck when I have work tomorrow, I will kill you in your sleep.” Eddie’s voice is deep enough that it takes Richie’s brain a second to catch up to his ears and fully comprehend the words.

He bites Eddie's neck once just to be contrary before he removes himself entirely.

"Huh." Richie looks Eddie over once, cheeks flushed, lips shiny with spit, eyes wide and endlessly dark. "I didn't know death threats did it for me but you really learn every day."

Eddie rolls his eyes but he's grinning up at him anyway.

"Sorry for acting bizarre." Richie has to shift his weight around to sit in a way that doesn't crush Eddie's legs. He finally moves his hand away from Eddie's ass to his trim waist.

The hands at Richie's head fall to his shoulders, pausing only briefly to tug at a particularly untamable curl near his ear. He pulls Richie into another few (considerably more tame) kisses. "I'm used to it."

"Oho!" Richie can't stand how unironically pleased he is to be insulted by Eddie. "Got em."

When all is said and done, Eddie's in bed by 9. He tries to insist Richie join him, but he refuses stubbornly. He knows it's fine, but he also knows he doesn't want to toss and turn and keep Eddie from his first night of proper sleep in too long. He curls up on the couch, actually does get some first draft writing done for work, and eventually falls asleep curled up under his only spare blanket.

Xxxx

Richie had had big plans to wake up and send Eddie off to work with a very romantic and nice home cooked breakfast, but when he wakes up Eddie is already gone. He checks the time on his phone. Eddie is *long* gone. Shit.

He has a slew of missed text messages from Stan.

'Eddie's on my train'

'Rich why is Eddie on my train.'

'Did he sleep over? DID YOU SLEEP TOGETHER?'

'Are you still asleep oh my god.'

This last message is punctuated by a series of middle finger emojis.

Richie texts back ‘if I’d gotten any of that dick I would have woken you up screaming about it from the rooftop’ and drops his phone back onto the couch, abandoning it for a hot shower. His couch is really not ideal on a thirty five year old back.

He tries hard to not think about Stan’s assumption. Or how he wishes it could have been true.

The thing is, he gets it. He understands that Eddie is fresh out of not just a long relationship, but one with a woman that had made it to the point of engagement. He knows that he is the first man Eddie’s ever dated and he’s almost positive there are some lingering issues coming from that, but they haven’t had an adult conversation about it. Anytime he’s tried to subtly open the floor to it, Eddie hasn’t taken the opportunity to say anything.

He wants to sleep with Eddie, like, obviously, he would have to be out of his mind to not want to do that. But he is also more than happy to wait forever if that’s what Eddie needs, and he wants Eddie to know that without him awkwardly announcing over dinner that he is perfectly content not having sex with Eddie until he wants to.

So he just... pushes it aside for the time being. It hasn’t been a problem, and Eddie hasn’t said anything, and Richie has a million emails to respond to about scripts and bits and which phrasing is funnier.

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie's stay at Richie's begins, Richie thinks that perhaps maybe it's possible he did not think this entire thing though

Notes for the Chapter:

this is a shortn but the alternative was a very longn and a very long gap before a next update bc u know what? this is still getting longer I GUESS. I hope you accept the slightly increased horny levels as an apology.

In his first week staying at Richie's apartment, Eddie forces Richie out of the house and into a Whole Foods to go proper grocery shopping. Apparently his big romantic plans of feeding Eddie froot loops before work was not nearly as bold or sexy as he had convinced himself it would have been. They cook a stir fry together. Or, well, they cook a stir fry and make out against Richie's fridge and accidentally set off the fire alarm in his kitchen. Richie has to force open his not very functional kitchen window and wave a towel around while Eddie salvages all of the least burnt snap peas.

Richie gets used to seeing Eddie lounging in pajamas alarmingly quickly and he never wants to go back. He thinks. Maybe. The nerdy khakis really do do it for him for some reason. And sometimes when Eddie gets home it's with the sleeves to his stuffy button up shirt rolled to his elbows looking overwhelmingly hot.

So, okay, he can't decide which is better, but Eddie in pajamas is still a sight to behold.

He starts looking less dead-to-his-core tired and more just... normal mid-thirties tired again after a few good nights sleeping comfortably. He snores a little, Richie can hear him through his bedroom door when he stays up late writing and emailing people three time zones behind him for work.

One night, as Richie prepares for bed at a leisurely pace, he experiences the shock of a lifetime. He just finished cleaning up after dinner and is taking his time making his way to the shower. Eddie is in his bedroom with the door cracked, probably reading or dozing or staring angrily at his phone in a way that means either email or sudoku.

He swings in his door, planning a quick stop to grab fresh sleep clothes, looking toward his bed to let Eddie know.

“Hey Eds I’m gonna-“

Only Eddie’s not on his bed.

Eddie’s on the floor. In tiny shorts and a tank top. Body contorted into an uncomfortable looking yoga pose.

He starts a little, but doesn’t otherwise move. His eyes blink open and Richie turns away before he can be caught staring creepily at the endless amount of skin on display.

“Sorry.” Richie robotically turns to his set of drawers and blindly grabs the first article of clothing his hands find, hoping to a benevolent god that it is a fresh pair of underwear and not a tshirt. “I’m gonna take a shower.”

He struggles to remember how to make his legs work and go in the direction he wants them to go, but manages to make his escape still in one piece. Eddie may or may not respond, honestly Richie doesn’t know, can’t hear anything other than his own heartbeat.

And if he jerks off in the shower, it’s just because it’s been a while, he tells himself. He’s decidedly *not* thinking about the alluring curve of Eddie’s ass where’d he’d been twisted, one leg bent at the knee. He’s not thinking about the muscles in his arm extended out flat across the floor, or wondering if the amount of hair on his arms and legs is matched by the amount on his chest, or the tiny workout shorts he’d made sure to bring with him. He’s not thinking about any of those things, and he definitely doesn’t allow himself to say Eddie’s name when he comes.

He stands on shaky legs and watches all evidence of his release disappear down the shower drain. "Fuck."

After, dressed and dried and somehow still on knife's edge, Richie can't force himself to sit. Eddie's in the living room when he comes back out & Richie just can't relax about it.

"Stan texted me," Richie stands and announces loudly. "He's needs to borrow, uh, sugar. So I'm gonna-" he points vaguely in the direction of the front door before loudly rummaging through the kitchen cupboards until he finds the large brick bag of sugar.

"Okay." Eddie glances up from the couch. "I'm gonna grab a shower."

Richie's brain helpfully reminds him of what he did in that shower not ten minutes ago. He attempts to reply, but all that escapes him is a strange little squeak.

Moments later he is pounding on Stan's door, frantic and loud.

"Richie?" Stan asks from the small crack allowed by the chain lock on his door.

"Let me in," Richie demands.

"I'm-" Stan looks back inside his apartment. "In the middle of something."

"Stan, it's an emergency."

The door slams shut and he can hear the rattling of the chain lock before it reopens, wider.

"Are you okay?" Stan asks as Richie pushes into his apartment. "Is Eddie- why do you have sugar?"

"For lies," Richie responds, still clutching the sugar to his chest. "I'm-"

"Stan?" A woman's voice calls out from the next room. A moment later a woman with short blonde hair who Richie has never seen before in his life steps into the kitchen. Her eyes dart between Stan

and Richie. "Is everything okay?"

"Yeah, Pat, Sorry." Stan stands stock still between the two of them. "This is my friend, Richie, he has an emergency?"

He directs the last part at Richie himself, who had been so dumbfounded for a solid second that he'd forgotten his major crisis.

"I'm." Richie pauses, struggles for words, not sure how to express *what* he is. "What emotion is it when you just want your twunk boyfriend to rail you?"

Horror dawns on Stan's face, something like surprised amusement on Pat's.

"That's not an emotion, Richie!" Stan barks. "How is this an emergency?"

Richie is holding the sugar so tightly his knuckles have gone white.

"Because I can't *do* anything about it because he- because that's just not on the table right now!" Richie hisses.

"Have you talked to him about it?" Stan asks.

Richie gapes, shaken, holding sugar and saying nothing because he is a simpleton.

"Talk to Eddie about it," Stan advises. "And then we can talk more when I don't have a date over?"

Richie nods pathetically. He waves and tells Pat it's nice to meet her. She wishes him luck in getting his twunk boyfriend to rail him.

On his way out, he leaves the large bag of sugar on Stan's countertop. "I guess this is fucking yours, now."

"I don't want it!" Stan yells after him, but he's already out the door.

XXXX

Stan shows up at their next dinner at Richie's looking... pleased isn't

a thorough enough word for his look, but smug is too smarmy. So whatever word is sort of in the middle there, Stan looks it, and it doesn't take Richie long to figure out why.

"Ugh." Richie takes care to inject more than enough disgust into his voice. "Stop rubbing your straight joy in our faces."

"You do it all the time!" Stan argues back, no hesitation.

"I'm allowed!" Richie points over at Eddie. "We're allowed!"

This catches Bev's attention from the stove where she's working next to Eddie on preparing something for cooking that Richie hadn't listened to. (Eddie had insisted that getting takeout every week was going to put them in an early grave). The two of them have been sharing very full glasses of wine, giggling together through a conversation Richie couldn't hear, sending something warm and content through him. She looks over at Richie, then at Stan, who has done nothing to look less annoyingly satisfied.

"What's he talking about?" She asks. "You do look weirdly happy..." she gestures at his face and body with the knife she's holding.

"I was waiting until I was sure things were serious," Stan explains. "I met someone, we've had a few dates."

He's smiling, and somewhere deep inside, Richie is happy for him. But he scoffs and says "disgusting."

Eddie tuts at Richie and congratulates Stan in the same breath.

"It's that serious?" Bev presses. Stan is always so fastidious in life and cautious when it comes to dating. He doesn't rush into naming things, and having only had 'a few dates' would usually qualify as rushing by his standards.

"Well." Stan blinks and Richie knows what he's going to say without a doubt in his mind. He can't believe it. "She stayed over last night, and, yeah."

Richie wrinkles his nose.

Bev and Eddie share twin wide eyed looks.

A second later, Bev groans at the ceiling. "Everyone I know is having sex but me!"

The exact moment she says it, Richie can see the tight clench of Eddie's jaw. The way that, for just a second, his teeth grind together painfully.

"Eddie." Bev clutches his shoulder in one hand, not noticing the flash of pinched expression on his face. "Please tell me you have a cute single friend."

Stan laughs and Eddie follows, but Richie sees the wavering lines of it and the way the corners of his mouth twitch from the force of trying too hard.

"I'll keep an eye out." He pats the back of Bev's hand politely.

"Thanks." She returns to chopping carrots, head dropped to Eddie's shoulder to replace her hand. "Richie your boyfriend is the best."

"I know," Richie says. "That's what I've been telling you."

After everyone has left, Richie and Eddie wash dishes together. Richie volunteers to wash because Eddie is in short sleeves, and half the reason to force Eddie to wash is so he has to roll his sleeves up to work. Eddie dries and puts away, meaning he has to stretch to put the bowls on the high shelves of Richie's cabinets, his shirt lifting to offer a tantalizing view at a narrow strip of skin at his back.

"Do you think Bev was serious?" Eddie asks after a long time of silence, only the clinking of glassware between them. "About the single friend."

"Yeah, probably." Richie shrugs. "Her last boyfriend was... a real piece of shit."

Eddie's brows furrow, angry and protective. He and Beverly have really connected since Eddie started coming to these dinners at Richie's, and it's his favorite thing to see. His oldest friends and his boyfriend together.

"I don't think she would ask if she wasn't serious." Richie accepts a plate that Eddie hands back to him, pointing at the tiniest speck he'd missed. He scrubs viciously. "Know someone?"

"I might." He takes the plate back, approves the work, and dries it well.

There's a lull while they wash and dry a few plastic cups. (Richie stopped buying glass when breaking them too frequently became a legitimate problem).

"And the other thing?" Eddie presses on. "She thinks we're..."

"Sleeping together?"

Eddie nods and Richie tries to not let the sudden nervous energy inside him launch him straight through the ceiling.

"She probably does, but whatever." Richie stares deep into the sudsy dish water, unwilling to reach in to pull the drain plug and have a piece of soggy food brush his fingers. "It doesn't matter. Ew, ew, ew."

Eddie rolls his eyes, but is waiting with the towel to help Richie dry his hands, wrapping around his stubby fingers.

"Do you want to?" Eddie isn't looking at him, when Richie looks up, like drying the webbing between Richie's fingers is the most interesting thing in the world.

"Um," Richie starts. He stops. He cannot force his voice above a whisper. "Yeah. Do you?"

The pause before Eddie responds is so long that Richie feels the beginnings of anxiety pressing in around his temples. The threat of a sweat breaking out along his hairline.

"I do," Eddie whispers back. "I'm just. I don't. This is so awkward."

"Eddie." Richie pulls the towel from Eddie's hands and tosses it onto the counter. He pulls Eddie after him toward the living room, not wanting to have this conversation he's been trying to initiate for a month standing in his drafty poorly lit kitchen. He guides Eddie into

a seat on his beat up old secondhand couch.

"This is so stupid," Eddie groans miserably. He drops his head into his hands.

"Whatever it is is not stupid," Richie says slowly, carefully. He doesn't move from his perch on the very edge of the couch, ignoring how badly he wants to slouch forward and hold Eddie in his arms.

"It feels stupid." Eddie grabs a pillow and clutches it in his fists. "I should be able to say I want to- to fuck my boyfriend without freaking out about it."

"But if you can't say it without freaking out, like, that's okay," Richie points out.

"No, I'm too old for this." Eddie's frown is deep, pulling lines into his face that have no place being there. "To be freaking out like a teenager 'cause I don't know what I'm doing."

Richie opens his mouth to say something, but Eddie keeps pushing on.

"Sometimes I just want to get it over with so I can stop worrying about it."

He's not having a full on hyperventilating panic attack, but it's a damn near thing. Richie throws caution to the wind and trusts Eddie to tell him to back off if he needs to. He tugs Eddie toward him by his shoulder, not enveloping him entirely but holding him snug at his side. It helps his peace of mind when Eddie moves into it, pushes his face against Richie's shoulder.

"I know it's not completely up to me," he says. He pets one hand over the back of Eddie's head, over and over. "But I don't want us having sex to feel like something you have to get out of the way."

"I know." Eddie's voice is muffled in Richie's shirt. He shifts his head to be heard better. "You shouldn't have to deal with this, though, waiting around. Stan and his girlfriend-"

"Apples and pineapples, man." He continues to play idly with Eddie's

hair. "Stan has lived like, a perfectly unrepresed hetero life, pretty harsh to compare yourself to that."

"It's apples and oranges," Eddie murmurs.

"Exactly!" Richie exclaims, deliberately ignoring the fact that Eddie was correcting him, not agreeing with him.

"You're not going to believe this, but it's true." Richie breathes in and out once, sharp. If Eddie is going to make himself vulnerable, it's only fair he does back. "You could never want to have sex ever and I wouldn't mind. I just like being with you."

Eddie twists to give him a skeptical look out of the corner of his eye. Richie figures if he's calm enough to shoot him looks, though, things are going well.

"I see the way you look at me, sometimes." It makes Richie cringe openly. He thought he was being sly. Eddie interrupts before he can awkwardly apologize. "No, I like it. It feels nice? But when I think about doing something with that it's like I freeze."

"Just because I want to doesn't mean we have to," Richie says, adding to his previous point. He kisses Eddie's temple just once, quickly. "And just because you want to doesn't mean you're *ready* to."

"It's not like I'm a scared virgin." Eddie's voice hides none of his embarrassed confusion.

"Well, no," Richie agrees easily. He presses a finger gently against the side of Eddie's head. "But there's a lot going on up here. Eddie, you were engaged like six months ago."

Eddie sighs.

"But that was horrible."

"It's still true, though." Richie shifts so he's leaning into the back of the couch more, turning to give Eddie more space on his shoulder and chest to cling to. "It's not realistic to go from full blown repression to lots of gay sex right away."

Eddie snorts, sounding only a little damp.

“Did I tell you how I ended things?” Eddie asks. He sounds better than Richie would have expected. His voice is mostly steady. He sounds more annoyed with himself than actually upset. “I had a panic attack, middle of the night after looking at wedding venues all day.”

Richie bites down on any remarks. He knows that sometimes he just needs to listen.

“I just left. I packed a bag and when she woke up I told her I was gay and I left.”

“That’s-“ Richie delves deep into his supportive boyfriend word banks. “Really fucking dramatic for someone who didn’t know they were gay, Eddie.”

Lucky for him, Eddie knows him and knows how he works and this makes him laugh rather than punch him in the face like he might deserve.

“I still feel guilty, I think,” he admits.

“Don’t,” Richie says. “I mean, I know that’s not how feeling guilty works but you did the right thing.”

“I know.” Eddie finally lets go of the pillow and wraps an arm around Richie’s waist, returning his awkward half cuddle. “I’m sorry, this must be so annoying.”

“Eds.” Richie pushes Eddie so he’s not hiding his face in Richie’s collarbone. “One of us in this relationship is annoying, and it’s definitely not you.”

“But-“ Richie stops him continuing with a finger on his lips.

He moves his finger away, following Eddie’s cheekbone until he’s cupping his face in the palm of his hand.

“I want you to be here. And I want to talk about this with you.” Richie speaks carefully, slowly, making sure he’s heard. “Because I like you and I like being with you.”

Eddie smiles, but it wavers, devastating and shaky and if he cries all bets are off. Richie will cry like he's getting paid to do it and it *will* be ugly.

Instead, his eyes glittering and damp, he leans forward and kisses Richie. Nothing more than a simple peck and then another, pulling away and falling into a strange twisted hug. Richie smooths his hand over his back, following his spine and holding him tight.

"Come sleep in your bed tonight," Eddie says.

"Okay." Richie's throat clicks when he tries to swallow, mouth dry. "Yeah. This couch is going to break my spine if I keep sleeping on it."

Eddie laughs in his ear and it's real and strong and it sends Richie floating. It feels unreal sometimes to be his age and experiencing this level of happiness for the first time he can remember.

They brush their teeth side by side. Richie gags when he brushes his tongue, which sets Eddie off in a sympathy gagging fit, which makes Richie laugh until there are tears streaming down his face.

They change and climb into bed side by side. Richie allows himself to entertain the thought that they'll still be doing this in thirty years, old and married with assigned side of the bed for each of them and a dog they fight over allowing to sleep at the foot or not. He doesn't say any of that out loud, of course, but it's nice to imagine.

Eddie grabs his hand over the blanket, and Richie's fingers curl around his like a reflex.

"Thanks, Richie." He presses a kiss to the back of Richie's hand, another to his knuckles. He looks over and even in the dark somehow his eyes glitter. "I like you so much."

The 'so much' is a new addition and it spreads in a painful grin over Richie's face. It feels like so much more than their usual.

"Me too."

XXXX

Richie spends the following week, for lack of a better phrasing, suffering from being just way too fucking horny constantly.

It's like as soon as Eddie said that he likes the way Richie looks at him, he's become fucking unhinged with it. He looks at Eddie constantly, somehow more than he had been before, which he didn't even think was possible. He openly stares at his ass when he takes the walk from Richie's room to the bathroom in his little shorts after working out, comfortable with doing it because he knows that Eddie knows he's doing it. He stares while Eddie brushes his teeth, and scrolls boringly on his phone, and as he falls asleep in Richie's bed right next to him.

Sometimes he looks up to stare after doing something, wiping his glasses on the hem of his shirt or tying up the trash, and finds Eddie is already looking at him first. In those moments, he doesn't know what to do with himself. He freezes, deer in headlights, until Eddie breaks it away with a light smile. One of these times in particular, Richie *swears* Eddie gives him a full once over, eyes flicking over Richie's body while he stands there holding a reeking garbage bag in one hand.

There's a big part of Eddie that seems more free after their conversation. Like now that they're on the same page and he's not so afraid of miscommunicating his desires, he can easily check Richie out and touch him casually and it's fine. He can and does climb onto Richie's lap in the middle of watching cartoons one evening, straddling his thighs and kissing him filthy. Richie holds strong at his thin waist over the hoodie he'd been lounging in and makes an eager, needy sound when Eddie licks into his mouth. And when things veer into the territory of *too much*, Eddie's mouth hot on Richie's neck and his thighs spread wide to fit over Richie's legs, he pulls away and it's fine. Richie misses the heat of him though, when he moves off his lap. Misses the feel of his firm body under his hands, much firmer than Richie's.

Eddie blinks over at Richie while daffy duck loses his shit about something on tv, going completely ignored. His pupils are wide and his breath is still coming short and Richie knows he's going to apologize before he even gets there and he wants to stop it short.

“Your eyes are so pretty.” It’s not what he was really aiming for when he opened his mouth, but it’s true. It makes Eddie glance away, but the corner of his mouth lifts into half a smile. “They’re like... cow eyes.”

The laugh that bursts out of Eddie is loud and surprised, his eyebrows pressed together in confusion. “What the fuck?” He giggles, trying to tamp down his reaction and failing.

“Cows have very pretty eyes!”

Eddie laughs and does not apologize and Richie slots that away as a win.

—

That night, in bed, Richie curls closer than he’d dared to before.

“I’ve been thinking,” he announces into the dark, over Eddie’s head where it’s tucked toward Richie’s chest.

Eddie snorts and Richie slaps weakly at his elbow.

“I’m serious!” He doesn’t move away from where his weak slap connected, slides his hand up Eddie’s arm until it’s disappearing into the sleeve of his tshirt, just a bit. “I was wondering if it would be helpful if we did a screening together.”

“Hm?” Eddie’s eyes are shut, but he’s listening, Richie can see it in the set of his eyebrows.

“Like a blood screening, you know?” He pokes at Eddie’s shoulder under his sleeve, trying to prod his way into his armpit annoyingly just to make him squirm. “They’re all over the city, those healthy sex places.”

Eddie’s eyes launch open. They search Richie’s face like they’re looking for the joke. “You’d do that?” He asks.

He doesn’t advertise it much, or like, he doesn’t come right out and say ‘I’m paranoid about health shit’, but Richie isn’t completely unobservant. He sees the way Eddie rushes for his hand sanitizer

after they ride the train or go out into the public. He knows the virtual pharmacy he brought with him from his apartment, most of the medicine preventative, immunity boosters and seltzer tablets and allergy pills despite it being January. It didn't take him an inordinate amount of time to think that maybe his general health paranoia would extend into sexual health as well.

He also is *not* going to advertise the sheer amount of time he spent researching the clinics in Brooklyn, their reviews and hours and the appearances of the buildings and their like... fucking *health department* scores. Anything that could scare Eddie off from going in.

"Yeah." He shrugs one shoulder. Mister no big deal, that's him. Mister didn't spend four hours reading about hypochondria and sexual repression on google. "That's a thing couples do together."

"Is it?" Eddie asks, skeptical. "Have you?"

"Yeah," he confirms. "Hey can I tell you something?"

He doesn't wait for Eddie to respond. If he waits too long he'll lose his steam.

"I know you think I'm like, a paragon of sexuality-" Eddie scoffs and shoves his shoulder, it jostles Richie's hand away from his armpit where he'd come to rest "-highly sought after, clearly in peak physical form, a real ladies man-"

"I get it." Eddie has pulled away to look up at Richie properly, he's laughing and looking content. "You know I think you're super hot, what about it?"

Richie has to force his brain to not get caught up on *that*. He can think about that later, holy shit.

"Oh, I've only really fucked like, two dudes." He removes his arm from Eddie's sleeve where it was beginning to get uncomfortably damp. "Like I hooked up here and there, not a lot, but you know. Full blown-" he makes a lewd gesture in the space between them that makes Eddie grimace.

"So don't get all caught up on..." he pinches his lips together,

searching for the phrasing he wants. “On feeling like you’re behind in some race.”

Eddie thinks and thinks and thinks, Richie can see the wheels in his head turning steadily. All this thinking and he eventually says, “okay.”

“Okay?” Richie repeats, dumbfounded.

“Yeah, Okay.” Eddie nods like he’s solidifying the decision to himself. “Let’s do it.”

Richie grins. “Okay.”

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

If Richie's heart keeps crumbling when Eddie's around he's not going to have anything left geez boy

Notes for the Chapter:

just! one! more! bit! I dunno when the last part is coming, soon I imagine. BUT I became possessed with a new idea this week and I'm churning out as much of it as I can as quickly as I can bc it is what my adhd brain demands. I have notes and direction for this though, I just gotta ride this wave first

The next day Richie sends Eddie the link to the health clinic he'd already decided was best halfway through the morning, like he'd just started looking and it was the first one he'd found. Even he is not entirely sure why he feels the need to hide the amount of thought he's put into this, like maybe there's a fear that Eddie will get freaked out if he knows. Like if Eddie finds out that he's sunk hours into this, he'll misread that in some way. He wants Eddie to feel like he has control in this, because he does. He could text Richie back and say no because he doesn't like the color of the walls and he'd move on to the next option.

Instead, a couple of restless hours later, he gets a text back from Eddie.

'Working through lunch, but it looks good! Tomorrow?'

Richie replies with a thumbs up.

Eddie replies again with a heart.

Richie has to slump forward where he's sitting and press the edge of his phone into his forehead. It hurts, but if he doesn't do it, he'll float away and never come back down.

Eddie gets back from work tired and ravenous. They order an

obscene amount of takeaway from the Thai place down the street and actually make the hike to go get it together. The wind bites straight through their layers of clothing and parts of the sidewalk are coated in ice as they go, but Eddie rants about his day in visible puffs of hot breath and isn't exhausted and asks after Richie's work and... it's good. It's really really nice.

It makes Eddie laugh his ass off when Richie slips and stumbles, even though he manages to catch himself quite gracefully. He calls Richie an idiot and it makes him smile so hard the cold hurts his teeth.

When Eddie gets changed for his workout, he makes a rare exit from Richie's room in his shorts to the kitchen. He mumbles something about water but Richie is far too busy letting his brain melt out of his ears to really pay attention. He was doing work, he thinks, in the middle of typing something and now he's just looking at the insides of Eddie's knees while he stands in front of the fridge. His eyes trail up, slowly, and when he makes it all the way, Eddie is looking right back.

It catches him off guard. Eddie is so much more often shy about his looks. Soft smiles before turning away or rolling his eyes exaggeratedly.

This time, he looks back. There's no room to mistake it, he definitely looks Richie over. His eyes flick down, slow and gradual, and snap back to his eyes. His cheeks are flushed.

"Nice shorts." He means for the words to come out teasing, hoping to get Eddie to tell him to fuck off in that showy annoyed way he sometimes gets that is very cute. Instead, his voice is too deep, too honest, too revealing.

The shorts are, honestly, just normal ass shorts. They're not super fitted or anything, they're just short and comfortable and give room for Eddie to stretch and maneuver in.

"Nice sweatpants, asshole." He glares, but his voice isn't tight and annoyed like it should be.

"Thanks, they're Gucci." Eddie hates his sweatpants. They're like

fifteen years old and ragged at the bottoms from being stepped on.

The weird tension dissolves with Eddie's eye roll. He shoves Richie's shoulder when he breezes past the couch and Richie catches his wrist before he can make it too far away.

"Hey Eds." Richie shifts until he's kneeling at the lumpy arm of his shitty couch like an old church pew. It puts him at a whole new angle, so he has to look up at Eddie, and he finds he quite likes it. Not a shock, he guesses, he likes Eddie from all angles. "Wanna try something?"

Eddie steps just close enough that his arm isn't stretching out at an awkward angle and no farther. He looks wary. Not spooked, but surprised. "Like what?"

"Like-" he becomes too distracted by his new view of the underside of Eddie's jaw and the temptation so thorough it's running through his marrow to bite against it. If Eddie likes it when he looks at him he must be fuckin pleased as punch right now. "Like jerking off together, next to each other."

No matter how fast he is to catch it, Eddie's gasp is still audible from this close. His jaw drops a little, stuck open but saying nothing.

Richie lets go of Eddie's wrist to grab his hand instead, loose, light, easy to pull away from if needed. He does kiss under his jawline, just once, like it might satisfy that rabid craving inside of him.

"You can tell me to fuck off though," he rushes through right after. "I'll go jerk off in the bathroom and we can forget I said this."

Eddie's eyes bulge just a little at the suggestion, then flick to look down at Richie, like he's expecting to see him straining at the front of his sweatpants. He's not, not yet, but five minutes of listening to Eddie working out will do the trick without a doubt.

"Okay," Eddie says.

It takes Richie's brain a hot second to accept what his ears are insisting he heard. "Huh?"

“Let’s do it.” His fingers twitch against Richie’s. “I trust you.”

Richie’s like, entire spine attempts to leap from his body while his legs simultaneously turn into jello and he forgets everything he’s supposed to do. But then Eddie is kissing him, and he knows that. Kissing Eddie is the easiest thing in the world and it’s crazy that he’s allowed to do it almost anytime he wants. (Morning breath kisses are Strictly Not Allowed).

“Not on the couch,” Eddie demands. He turns with a minute jerk of his head, a lead for Richie to follow.

He does, feeling like a cartoon character that just smelled a fresh pie, floating after Eddie like he’s the only thing that exists on the planet. What was Richie doing before this? Did time exist before this?

Eddie primly straightens out his memory foam pillow against the headboard on the side of the bed that Richie has secretly begun to refer to as *Eddie’s side* in his mind. He climbs up and takes a seat, shifting around to find a comfortable spot with his bare legs out in front of him. Richie scrabbles around the other side of the bed, clambering up and half sitting on his own old and flattened pillow.

He palms himself through his sweatpants, not even really hard yet but getting there on anticipation alone. It won’t take long, though, all he really needs is to replay the sighing groan he’d heard Eddie let out when he was working out a few nights ago, floating out through the tiny crack of his open bedroom door like a siren call directly to his dick. He’d made the run to his bathroom like his ass was on fire, only feeling a very tiny little bit ashamed once he finished.

“Can I-“ Eddie swallows and Richie glances over at him, watches those big doe eyes shift from watching Richie’s hand to his face. “Just watch, for a minute?”

Richie’s dick twitches in his hand, Jesus Christ.

He leans into the little single drawer table next to his bed, desperately hoping there’s still an ancient bottle of lube in there. He really doesn’t think Eddie would appreciate it if he licked his hand in front of him.

“Dinner and a show?” Richie re-emerges with the lube, thankful that he is not a person who ever throws anything away. “Edward, don’t ever say that I don’t spoil you.”

Eddie huffs a sharp breath out of his nose but says nothing, no snappy retort or demand for him to shut up. His silence has Richie glancing back over, trying not to drip lube all over his shirt from the gaps between his fingers.

“You good?”

Eddie nods sharply.

He snaps the bottle shut and drops it into the vast space between them, wasting no time in shoving his hand into his pants. He sighs when he finally gets his hand around himself, a relief even though he’d been in this same position not 24 hours ago. Being in an enclosed space with Eddie for an extended period of time has had him giving teenage Richie who thought he’d invented masturbating a real run for his money. And he’s here, more enclosed than ever, not just with Eddie but being actively *watched* by him.

So he arches a little and rolls his hips, because if Eddie wants to watch him then he’s going to give him something to watch. This isn’t his usual utilitarian routine by a long shot. He twists his wrist and he can see the fabric of his pants getting darker where it’s going damp at the end of his cock. His hips twitch with the thought that Eddie can see it too, and he lets himself moan, the kind of sounds he’s been biting into the back of his hand in the bathroom for a week and a half.

His eyes fall shut for just a second, his head drops back against the headboard. The sharp *snick* of the bottle of lube opening again is conspicuous in the mostly silent room, but his hand only falters in its movement for a moment.

Richie blinks open his eyes just a crack, only enough so that he can watch Eddie’s left hand disappear into the waistband of his shorts. Alarm bells go off in his head. *It’s happening! Oh my god! Pay attention, commit this to memory!*

He can barely make out anything through the weird swishy fabric his shorts are made of, but he can track the shadows of his knuckles pulling again and again. He can see the muscles in Eddie's forearm as they work, going tense and defined around the tendons of his wrist. He can hear the shudder in Eddie's breath because he's straining to hear every single sound he makes. It all sends his breath shaking out of him in an echo and he can't even *see* anything.

It gets to be too much, too cramped with the textured waistband of his pants rubbing at his wrist annoyingly. So he shifts and wiggles and struggles with his off hand to pull his pants down over his hips to pull taut at his thighs. The waistband had long ago given up any attempt to cling to elasticity, so it wasn't *that* difficult really. And his dick is out, red and leaking already, especially now that he has full range of movement and can move his wrist just the way he likes.

Eddie gasps again and his breath hitches in a captivating series of sounds. Richie wants desperately to record and hold onto those noises forever. His legs fold and fall apart, his knee could almost brush against Richie's thigh if he strained a little bit for it, but he doesn't push his luck that far just yet.

"Eddie," Richie whispers. It comes out *way* sluttier than he'd intended, but he's getting close and needy and he really can't be blamed for that.

"Oh my god," Eddie groans in response. His voice alone does more to Richie than all porn ever created could even hope to achieve. The rustling of the fabric of his shorts when his hand speeds up and the slick noises of his fingers working have Richie's toes curling into his comforter.

He finally dares to look over, not a side glance or a sneaky peek, but get a good full look at Eddie. He's flushed and biting his lip hard to stifle his noises, his arm is working at a frantic pace, and he's looking Richie up and down like he's a piece of meat. Eddie meets his eyes when he catches Richie looking, his cheeks going even more red and his eyes glance at Richie's lips briefly.

"Fuck." Richie can't choose between watching Eddie's fist and watching his face. "You close?"

“Yeah.” Eddie’s chest heaves under his worn thin workout tshirt. “Richie.”

Richie’s breath shakes out of him like a punch to the gut. He thinks he might make a noise, something garbled and messy, but he can’t be sure of it. Not with his blood rushing in his ears when he comes on his lower stomach and down over his knuckles.

He’s almost immediately echoed by Eddie with his own strangled held back noise and that’s- he hates that, that Eddie feels the need to restrain himself, but it’s still quite a noise. He vocalizes on his exhale, a long unsteady breath that has Richie’s dick giving one final valiant effort to show its interest.

They’re both silent for a long time after, catching their breaths and slowly returning to reality. Richie takes his time to absorb that this *really* just happened and wasn’t some kind of dream. No dream of his could ever include the details of Eddie’s posture, gone slack and loose limbed in a slouch against the headboard, or the way the muscles in his thighs are still twitching occasionally. He just is not that creative.

“That was-“ Eddie sounds wiped out. “That was a good idea.”

Richie slouches even further than he already was before, relieved. Part of him had already been starting to worry Eddie might freak out, might go tense and quiet.

Instead, Eddie is smiling, and then grimacing once he removes his hand from his shorts.

“I need a shower.”

It’s such an *Eddie* to say it makes Richie laugh. So tickled and giddy that he can’t stop himself, still chuckling even as he grabs a handful of tissues to clean himself with.

“Ah shit,” Richie swears while straightening his clothes. Eddie hums his question, more alert and sitting up, wiping his own fingers on a tissue. “I got jizz on my shirt.”

“Gross, Richie!” Eddie physically repels away from him. “I’m going to shower and if you haven’t changed by the time I get out I’ll kill you.”

After everything, after they've both showered and reheated their Thai food and are sitting at Richie's cramped little table with their feet tangled together, he catches Eddie smiling. It's not overly wide and cheesy, just a little grin, but it pulls at his dimples and hits his eyes and Richie can feel his heart crumble just a little bit in his chest.

XXXX

He spends the entire next day floating, head in the clouds. He thinks he does work, at some point, maybe. Eddie works through lunch again and somehow the hours just melt away until he's home and slamming the door behind him in a big hurry.

The noise of him rustling around and kicking his shoes off is noticeably more loud and rushed than his usual, it grabs Richie's attention and has him looking up. If Eddie's in a real tizzy over something he wants to experience the whole show.

"What's up?" He asks, standing from his seat.

Eddie glowers from his spot next to the messy shoe mat. In the next second he's stomping across the room in his socked feet, still bundled, peacoat only half unbuttoned.

"I couldn't focus *all day*, you asshole." He jabs one gloved finger into Richie's chest. Before Richie can ask why he's in trouble, though, those same gloved hands are wrapping in the front of his shirt and pulling him down. And suddenly they're kissing, no warning, no reason as far as Richie knows.

He eventually gets with the program and kisses Eddie back. His hands find their way over his neck and maneuver to cradle the back of Eddie's head, possibly his favorite place to be while kissing, knocking the winter hat he still hadn't removed to the floor.

"All I could think about was last night," Eddie says.

Richie's stomach swoops dangerously, tumbling around like it's on particularly rocky spin cycle when Eddie kisses him again still holding fistfuls of his shirt. It's the most assertive Eddie has been, physically, and it's making Richie dizzy with it.

Then Eddie pulls away. "I want to do it again."

All Richie can do is gape. And because he is the stupidest human being to ever grace the planet Earth, he opens his mouth and says "there's only like an hour until the clinic closes."

He hates himself more than he's ever hated himself in his life. That *includes* the times as a teenager when compulsory hetero norms had really had a hold on him. He's standing here with an eager and needy Eddie in front of him, asking him in no uncertain terms to go into his bedroom with him to masturbate together, and in response he brings up the *ultra romantic STI screening* they planned to do together.

"They have hours tomorrow!" He practically shouts in his rush to get the words out, needing to stop the growing disappointed look from settling onto Eddie's face. "I don't know why I said that, that was stupid."

Eddie laughs and the world sets itself to rights again. "Yeah?"

"Yes."

Their hands tangle in their combined efforts to get the rest of Eddie's winter clothes off, tugging at his jacket and scarf. (Eddie still moves away long enough to hang his jacket over the back of a chair instead of letting it drop to the floor, of course). It's not easy work, not with how Richie keeps crowding close and wrapping his long arms around Eddie and kissing him into his bedroom door, the wall inside, the edge of the bed, hands all over Eddie's thighs and ass. Eddie hardly any better, fingers messing up Richie's hair and digging into his shoulders just on the edge of painful.

The contact of those fingers convulsing against the meat of his shoulders and the breathless gasps Eddie makes when Richie breaks away to bite gently at his neck have him swelling in his pants already. Actually dressed and not slobbering around for once, because he'd been responsible and got ready to go out well before Eddie finished work. Now he has to unzip and stomp back and forth to kick them back off and onto the ground in a messy pile with the legs all turned inside out that has Eddie staring down at them in something like disapproval.

Eddie removes his own work slacks at a comparatively more sedate pace and folds them properly. Richie makes an honorable effort to watch while also army crawling over his bed to the exact same position he'd been in yesterday.

"All day," Eddie repeats. He follows up into the bed effortlessly and rips off his tie and overshirt, leaving himself dressed in just a soft tshirt and dark boxers. "We had a meeting this morning, it was important, and all I could think about was coming home and doing this."

"Jesus." Richie's digging through the drawer behind himself blindly, has to wrap his off hand around his erection over his boxers just for the slight relief of it. Eddie was *not* this chatty yesterday but he's thankful for whatever it is that's brought it out of him.

"Stanley was talking about something on the train." He reaches out, making a grabby hand motion for the lube as soon as Richie's finished with it. "I don't think I heard a word of it."

"New rule." Richie hisses when he wraps his hand around himself, cold lube a shock to the system. "Never mention Stan's name while my hand is on my dick ever again."

Eddie laughs warm and loud, melts into a hot melted honey smooth hum when he wraps his hand around himself. "Hang on, turn this way, wanna see you."

Richie's blood turns into fire, burning him from the inside out when he shifts and turns and Eddie is already facing him. He's pulled his boxers down over his hips this time, Richie can see the dusty pink of his cock between the cracks of his fingers, peeking out of his loose fist on every slow downstroke.

"God, Eddie." Richie mirrors him, shoves his boxers down and over his hips, making an effort to match the pace of his fist. Slouched back to balance on his off hand, posture open.

It's strange, being looked at the way that Eddie looks at him, like he's being devoured. His eyes trail inch by inch down Richie's body, leaving trails of chills in their wake without even touching him.

“Shit, you’re big,” he says when his eyes settle where Richie is pumping himself. His pupils are huge, eyelids hooded.

Richie wants to comment something smooth and sexy back, something about how Eddie’s selling himself short, considering now Richie is seeing firsthand how much he’s growing in his grip. He can’t put the words in order in his head to get them out of his mouth, like he’s lost his ability to tell Eddie how hot he is suddenly. Maybe it’s just that his nerves still haven’t settled from the rapid pace of the past ten minutes or whatever it’s been. Eddie’s unexpected assault still keeping his brain from functioning.

“Not really,” Richie says instead. He already feels so breathless. Feels like his heart has come loose and is rattling around his ribcage like a pinball. “Just like, proportional.”

“Everything about you is big,” Eddie says. His voice wavers with the jostling of his arm. “I like it.”

Richie can’t even fathom the English language anymore. Eddie talks a lot normally, a wordy chatterbox at dinner with all of his thoughts and tales from work, but never anything like this. Just once he’d pulled away while they were making out, looking dazed, to say ‘you’re good at this’ in an impressed tone, but that was it.

“Your shoulders-“ Eddie continues to whittle away at Richie’s tenuous grasp on his sanity. His voice comes out more pinched, audibly tensed. “Your h-hands.”

“Fuck.” Richie speeds up his hand, twisting his wrist into every upstroke. “Eddie, *fuck*.”

“Like it when you look at me, Rich.” So he does, looks and watches Eddie where he’s leaking. Watches Eddie rubbing his thumb over the head of his cock and the full body shudder it elicits. “Like you want me.”

“I want you,” Richie confirms, gasping. “Eddie, constantly.”

“Oh.” He sounds surprised by it somehow, as if Richie isn’t completely obvious at all hours of the day. His hips twitch and roll

against his fist like he's not aware he's doing it, stilted little movements, head dropped back over his shoulder and mouth open.

This time when he comes, Richie gets to see it all, and he never wants to go back to life without it. Eddie's thighs shake with it and he lets out another broken moan. All Richie can think about is touching him, grabbing his legs and coming across his thighs, watching his socked toes curling and uncurling and the jumping of his flat stomach with every aftershock. Eddie's fucking *toned* he realizes with a kind of dazed horror. He's never seen him shirtless but what skin he can see is tight and firm and he has like, *the* sexy hip lines Richie didn't know real people *could* have.

He thinks he says Eddie's name when he comes, he doesn't know, it feels too much like his brain has come detached from reality to know much of anything. He knows he comes out of it gasping for breath, the pits of his shirt damp with sweat, thankful his glasses have stayed put so he can see Eddie sitting across from him looking blissful.

"Feel better?" He asks. The box of tissues from yesterday have reappeared and he grabs a few.

Eddie nods, still looks very satisfied with himself.

Richie kicks out against his ankle. "Can I kiss you now?"

"*God*, yes." And he's on his knees, tugging his boxers up and awkwardly hobbling on the mattress toward Richie as quickly as the uneven surface will allow him to.

They meet halfway, Eddie kneeling taller than him, and Richie sobs a moan against his lips. He needs this, needs this touching, this assurance. The last guy he'd been with had- it didn't matter now, Eddie knows what to do like an old pro, hugging around Richie's shoulders and holding him tight and secure while they kiss slow and aimless. One hand raises, finds Eddie's cheek, the other following to do the same and finding itself stopped by a tight grip around the wrist.

"Don't touch my face with the hand you just had on your dick." Eddie gives him no room to reply, returns to kissing him, still holding

his wrist.

Richie lets his arm drop, redirecting to slide a reverent trail over the outside of his thigh. He doesn't mean to break the kiss, but it's hard to kiss and smile at the same time and Eddie's got him laughing again and burying his face against his chest. He doesn't seem to mind, one hand petting at his head and the other hovering over his shoulder like Richie cares if Eddie touches him, thinks next time he'll suck those fingers into his mouth just to prove his point.

"I think we missed walk-in hours," Richie says. His thumb has found the leg of Eddie's boxers and is sliding back and forth just under the hem, following the soft outer curve of one cheek.

Eddie's responding laugh vibrates in his chest right against Richie's ear, right next to his steady heartbeat. "I hear they have hours tomorrow."

They luxuriate for an entire five more seconds before Eddie is clapping at his shoulder.

"I'm hungry," he announces. "Go wash up, it's your turn to cook."

xxxx

Eddie leaves work early so they can make it to the needlessly narrow time window at the clinic in Brooklyn without any hiccups. They walk hand in hand in the biting cold with Eddie's shoulders hunched up around his ears until they finally approach the completely innocuous building, boring and overlooked by the general public.

Intake takes a good while, sitting side by side more or less in silence on their phones. Richie wishes the place had those highlights books like the doctors' offices of his childhood had always had, he doesn't see what about being over the age of twelve is supposed to mean he no longer wants to find hidden umbrellas and snails in pictures.

He turns to relay this to Eddie and finds him looking at his phone with glazed eyes, unfocused, one knee bouncing rapidly.

"Eds?" He asks. "You okay?"

Eddie doesn't reply until Richie reaches out and grabs his knee in one hand. He starts, nearly dropping his phone.

"Huh? I'm okay." Eddie flashes a short smile at him. "Nervous I guess. I don't like doctors offices much."

The place isn't quite as cold and lacking in humanity as most doctors offices Richie has been to. It's painted warm and welcoming and the chairs aren't 40 years old on the verge of falling apart, but there's only so much that can be done to a building to make it look less like a doctors office. It still has the sterile hotel room art in frames and large sized posters about birth control and safe sex and a huge brochure display about Living with HIV! and Knowing Your Choices!

Richie flips his hand over on Eddie's leg, palm up, happy when Eddie picks up the hint and grabs his hand and laces their fingers tight.

"No worries, babe." Richie bops their shoulders together. "We'll go back, piss in a cup, and we can go back home and tell Stan all about it."

Eddie's fingers clench tighter. "You're not telling Stan that we went on a piss in a cup date."

"But!" Richie starts. Is stopped by Eddie's stern look.

"Can I tell Bev?" He asks. "She'll think it's cute."

"You're not allowed to tell any of our friends about this while I'm within hearing distance." Eddie is snappy and irritated about it, but it's a million times better than the nervous jittery mess he'd been just a moment before.

"Got it." Richie nods. "I'll wait until you're in the bathroom."

Eddie grumbles about hating him and punches his shoulder, but he's smiling.

Stan walks in on them making out in the kitchen to Eddie's complete mortification. He's sitting on the countertop, Richie stood between

his thighs with his hands wrapped around him to finger at every last knob of his spine. He jerks away like a kid caught with his hand in the cookie jar when the door swings open and Stan gasps theatrically, and groans a whispered little “oh no” to himself with his head buried in his hands.

Richie does not have any room left in his entire 6’2” body for shame and instead grins over at Stan obnoxiously.

“Told you to fuckin knock,” he says gleefully. Stan looks like someone shit in his cornflakes.

“That’s my coworker.” Eddie’s voice is so quiet it doesn’t carry far, whispering in muted horror to himself.

“Richie you knew I was coming,” Stan points out. It has Richie reeling, offended, because the whole thing had been *Eddie’s* idea and he knew that even if he *did* throw him under the bus Stan wouldn’t even *believe* him.

He doesn’t throw him under the bus because he is a nice boyfriend and Eddie would never speak to him again if he did.

Dinner is weirdly no different to any of their other dinners of the past few weeks. It makes sense, neither Stan nor Bev know that he and Eddie have only recently made the moves that they have, but it feels like it should be immediately obvious. Like when Richie lost his virginity in college, walking back to his dorm feeling like everyone who looked at him would be able to just *tell*. No one can, of course, it’s not a scarlet letter or anything. There’s no neon sign above his head that reads RECENTLY SAW MY BOYFRIEND’S DICK FOR THE FIRST TIME. It’s just always strange to be confronted with the fact that no one is thinking as deeply about you as you are.

They committed to doing an STI screening together today and Bev is talking about a new movie she wants to go see.

She has Eddie leaning forward and telling her about some friend who could go with her and giving her a phone number in the next moment.

It's just so normal and weird.

XXXX

When Eddie gets home on Friday, he's quiet. Richie assumes that he's just tired again, it wouldn't be completely unusual. The end of a long week always has Eddie a little sleepier, more sedate over the phone and eager to climb into bed early. He's skipped lunch a few times all week, and Richie knows he's been busier than usual at work.

So Richie drops his work when Eddie shuffles over to him and wraps his arms and legs around him like a starfish when Eddie sits down and snuggles close. And he shifts any and all plans of struggling to cook together side by side away to make room for digging out the old frozen pizza he's pretty sure is buried deep down in his freezer somewhere when Eddie's breath goes deep and snuffly against his shoulder. It's been frigid and grey and snowing big fat snowflakes all day and Eddie's nose is a cold point against his neck that he pushes closer to in an attempt to warm him up. He smells nice, wrapped all close, something spiced and just a hint of the sweat in his hair from walking around for an hour with a big knitted hat on.

Forty minutes later when he pops back to reality with a start, Eddie looks disoriented and embarrassed.

"Sorry." His voice is all sleep mumble deep in a way he doesn't get in the mornings and not even the sight of him wiping drool away from his mouth helps to stop the tumbling in Richie's chest. "M'Tired."

"Yeah." Richie snorts. "I noticed."

"Shut up." He groans and stretches, back popping and twisting. "Work has been though."

"Bad?" Richie asks. Eddie complains sometimes, but it's mostly about his coworkers. His supervisor seems okay based on the amount of stories Eddie grumbles or shouts about her. His work is hard, but he seems to enjoy it. Richie sometimes feels like a child talking to him about it, like he has no idea of how working in an office works or what Eddie's day must look like.

Eddie shakes his head. “Just a lot. Wrapping things. I’m allowed to work from home starting Monday.”

Notes for the Chapter:

I don't do chapter names bc I can *barely* do story titles but just know as I worked on this me n my pal were def just calling it "the long jerking off chapter" so there ya go.

4. Chapter 4

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie goes home, but Richie follows

Notes for the Chapter:

Am I completely 100% happy with this ending? Not really. Am I gobsmacked that I finished anything at all? Absolutely. Am I posting this at the worst time of day to expect any kind of visibility? Probably. I hope anyone waiting for this hasn't lost patience!

I have a confession: I started this fic with the sole concept "richie gets railed by his twunk bf", then i wrote 20k and richie didn't even get railed. I can't stand myself.

The news that Eddie can work from home and will therefore be going *home* isn't exactly, like, Richie's favorite news he's ever gotten. He goes tense and stressed but keeps holding Eddie where he'd fallen asleep.

Only once the dumb frozen pizza is in the oven and they're getting ready to eat does Eddie ask if he's okay. His gut instinct is to laugh it off. Him? Okay? Of course he's okay! Mister hunky-dory over here is always ok!

Instead he shrugs.

"It'll be weird, you going home."

"Rich." There's a certain note in his voice, like the sound someone makes when they watch a video of a sad dog. It makes Richie's hackles raise, but he stamps the reaction down. Eddie leans heavily into Richie's side. "I'll still be here all the time."

"I know." He's so annoyed with himself. He knows he should be happy for Eddie but instead is pouting like an idiot. "I'll be fine, I'm just being stupid."

“You’re not.” Eddie turns in place, shifting his half lean into a proper hug with his arms settled at Richie’s hips and his chin jutting sharply into Richie’s chest. “It’s kinda nice, knowing you don’t want me to go. Thought you’d be sick of me.”

Richie squeezes tight around Eddie’s shoulders. “Never.”

They tumble into Richie’s bed together that night in a tangle, legs falling together as they roll and kiss and laugh like a couple of teens getting away with something. Richie takes care to land with Eddie above him, full range of movement, not pinned. He’s in control, always.

Eddie squeaks a surprised sound when Richie grabs a handful of his ass, and it makes Richie echo a loud laugh of his own. He snorts embarrassingly, which only serves to make Eddie laugh harder. They can’t even kiss this way, so they smile against each other’s cheeks and snicker like children.

When Eddie pulls away, he doesn’t roll his body out of Richie’s space. Leaves his pajama clad legs intertwined with Richie’s in such a tangle it feels like they’ll never be able to pull apart again. He props his head on one elbow to meet Richie’s eyes, fingers of his other hand pattering an off beat little pattern against his chest. Richie’s palm is warm at his lower back, tips of his fingers brushing over and over against the waistband of those soft french bulldog pajama pants.

“What was your favorite movie as a kid?” Eddie asks out of the blue. He does this sometimes, this unending game of twenty-one questions they’ve had running for three months so far with no signs of it ending anytime soon.

“Oh, tough!” Richie makes a show of considering. “You remember that animated Lord of the Rings thing?”

Eddie shakes his head, to Richie’s great disappointment, softened immediately by the following thought that this is another thing he gets to share with Eddie now. Another chance to see Eddie experience something new with him by his side, soaking up all of

these firsts greedily. Eddie looks almost ethereal above him in the lamplight, grinning and listening like what Richie says matters. So pretty.

“I watched it so many times I broke the tape.” He laughs. “My dad got so mad.”

“He-“ Richie has to break off to laugh again. “He took me to see Empire Strikes Back in the theater and we had to leave because I flipped shit at the carbonite scene.”

Eddie laughs too, though it’s not entirely clear if he actually finds the story funny or if Richie’s laugh is just contagious.

“My mom had to drag me out of ET,” Eddie shares. “I cried as soon as they showed the alien.”

Richie’s laugh takes his entire body with how he shakes.

“Eddie!” He reaches up to pinch Eddie’s cheek. “That’s so cute!”

“Fuck off!” Eddie wrenches away, slapping at Richie’s hand, but he’s smiling.

“I bet you were a cute kid.” He finds so much joy in the blush on Eddie’s cheeks.

“No,” Eddie denies. “I was small and awkward and neurotic.”

“You? Neurotic?” Richie asks, all feigned disbelief.

“Ha fucking ha.” Eddie grinds a knuckle into Richie’s sternum. “What about you?”

“Me?” Richie asks. He waggles his eyebrows excessively. “Oh I was a real sex machine, you know? It was the oversized limbs and oversized glasses, really got the ladies going.”

“Oh yeah?” Eddie rolls his eyes but is still grinning at him.

“Oh, Richie!” Richie puts on a high pitched voice, flicks pretend long hair over his shoulder. “It was so hot when you got punched in the

face today, touch our boobies!”

Eddie's laugh wheezes out of him in a rush of air, head dropping first against Richie's chest before sinking into the space between his arm and chest, forehead digging into Richie's armpit. “Gross,” he moans. “Boobies?”

“Direct quote.” Richie sticks three fingers in the air. “Scout's honor.”

“Yeah right.” Eddie's voice is muffled in the space of Richie's arm.

They pass hours like that, alternating between slow meandering kissing, no worry of a destination to keep them from exploring each other, and sweet bickering conversation. Richie had never known kissing to be so purposeless, always something to rush through to get to the good stuff. Or what he'd always thought of as the good stuff, foolishly, because this is really very good on its own. Kissing like it's a leisurely activity in its own right, something to do just because it's fun and they like to do it together. It helps a good bit, of course, that Eddie's really quite good at it. He's good at the conversation, too. He might roll his eyes and tell Richie's he's the least funny person he's ever met, but he usually does it while also laughing. Doesn't tell him to stop, or shut up, actually more often than not gives just as good as he gets.

It's a little sad that Eddie will be going back to his own apartment, sure, but they can always go back to this. The sleepover barrier has been broken and weekends can be theirs all the time now, and they can crawl into each other's beds, warm and safe.

They bicker back and forth about which scary movie is best until Richie concedes that Eddie is correct just to see the triumphant look on his face and then take the opportunity to kiss it off of him. They're exhausted, though, blinks getting longer and slower even as they're still talking. Until one or both of them nod off mid sentence, babbling about ideal pets one second and lightly snoring the next.

They wake up late into the morning, something Eddie hadn't permitted last weekend, instead pushing up and dragging himself into a shower way too early and leaving Richie alone. Now, though, Eddie's chest is pressed to his back and one arm is in a loose drape over his chest. His breathing is slow, but not in the heavy way it gets when he sleeps.

"You up?" Richie mumbles, voice still all sleep thick.

Eddie grunts behind him.

Eddie makes a disgusted noise followed by a lot of unintelligible grumbling.

"Eds?"

The grumbling repeats and gradually takes form.

"Why're your shoulders so fuckin' big." His forehead presses in close against Richie's spine. "Annoying."

It makes Richie laugh and roll over, pressing a mess of scratchy kisses to Eddie's equally scratchy jaw. Eddie grumbles and refuses to open his eyes and is loose and malleable in Richie's hands, ready to fall back into sleep even though morning is past.

"Cmon lazy," Richie prods at Eddie's ribs. "I'll make you breakfast if you get up."

They shave side by side before they do anything else. Or Eddie shaves and Richie openly stares, distracted by the focused look in his eyes and the grip of his fingers around the razor. Like it's not even sexy but he feels like he's at an old timey peep show with every new centimeter of freshly exposed skin Eddie pulls away from and brushes fingers over to check for missed spots. Getting him all hot under the collar like an old west man hollering over a woman showing her ankles or something.

He cuts himself at his chin and Eddie scolds him, voice distorted by the twist of his mouth, for not being careful. In the same moment he hands him a square of toilet paper to press against his skin and Richie does, silent and shaken.

xxxx

On Sunday night, Eddie goes home.

He doesn't take everything with him, which has Richie's heart beating racing with happiness. He leaves his plant and a few items of clothing that Richie eagerly clears part of a dresser drawer for, the rest they drag away

together on the subway back to Bushwick. Back to Eddie's modern apartment.

Richie only stays for a little while before he heads home, knowing Eddie has to wake up early and work.

xxxx

Returning to the old routine is strange, but Richie swears he's fine. Even working from home Eddie doesn't check his phone, waiting until his strictly relegated lunch hour to call and chat. He sounds comparatively relaxed to how he normally sounds at lunch, though, and Richie figures that's a nice thing.

xxxx

On Tuesday they hit a lull in their lunch phone call. It's not an awkward or extended silence, more of just a mutual quiet that falls over both of them when their conversation dies down naturally.

"Is it crazy that I miss you?" Eddie asks after a minute.

Richie's stomach flip flops wildly.

"If that's crazy, you're in good company."

"Really?" Eddie sounds so surprised and disbelieving it's absurd.

"Yes! Obviously." Richie does not remind him that he'd literally pouted about Eddie leaving like a child. "I called your name to tell you something earlier and forgot you weren't here."

"I didn't know where I was when I woke up this morning."

They both laugh, but it's comforting for Richie to know that he's not alone in being a weird pining idiot. He wonders if Eddie laid alone in bed last night just like he had, feeling cold and alone without Richie there to curl around.

"Wanna come over?"

Richie is up and packing a bag before Eddie's hour is even done, on the

next train out of Kensington and buzzing at his door as quickly as his two legs can carry him there.

He tries to kiss Eddie in his little foyer with his perfectly organized shoe rack and is reminded that it's still technically the work day and Eddie doesn't get paid to make out against his front door. So Richie dedicates himself to not pouting and tries to not make too much of a nuisance out of himself, wandering around while Eddie works in the living room. He reads part of a book from one of the shelves in Eddie's bedroom, opening up somewhere toward the middle and inevitably getting bored when he doesn't know who any of the characters are or what they're talking about.

He finds the horrible lime green bracelet from the arcade on one of the shelves, on top of a couple books, and smiles at it. It's so ugly and stupid, and Eddie still hangs onto it like it's as important as anything else in his room.

He pokes around in the kitchen, inching closer and closer to five o'clock and Eddie's freedom.

"I'm gonna make a chili," he declares after cataloging a list of the ingredients Eddie has around.

"Okay." It's all Eddie says, and it's striking. Richie's been wandering around with about the same amount of interaction as he was getting from Eddie while on separate sides of Brooklyn, but hasn't felt nearly as lonely. Something about existing separately while sharing a space so much more enjoyable than sitting at home alone.

Some of the way into his cooking, while consulting his phone not for the recipe but to change to a different song, he receives a message from the clinic prompting him to log in to view his results. Off to his distant left, he hears the moment Eddie receives the same message and knocks something to the floor.

"You got them too?" Richie peeks out around the kitchen bar to where Eddie is seated.

Eddie nods, glancing away from his phone for only a second to meet Richie's look.

"That seems fast, doesn't it?" He asks. "Is that fast?"

Richie shrugs, he hadn't really thought about it for more than a second. Sometimes these things take a while and sometimes they don't.

"Do you think it's a good thing it was fast?" Eddie asks, his words beginning to come more rapidly, voice higher and tighter. "Or do you think it's like, this is urgent you better come in right now fast?"

"Eds." Richie leaves the kitchen in a rush, flying to Eddie's side like a magnet. "It's probably just, like, a slow time of year, relax."

He drops one hand on Eddie's shoulder, fingers massaging across his shoulder blade and neck, happy to feel even the most incremental amount of relaxing.

"Let's just open them and see?" He suggests. "Everything else comes after."

"Okay." Eddie nods shakily, growing steadier and more self-assuring after a moment. "Yeah, ok."

They sit side by side, following directions to their results on their phones. A minute passes before Eddie sinks back into the cushion of his couch with a deep heaving sigh.

"All clean," he says. He says it like it's a surprise somehow, and Richie knows it's part of that paranoia and anxiety, but still. It makes him glad he suggested this, to see the relief on Eddie's face when confronted with solid proof that he's fine.

That doesn't stop him, though, from looking at his phone with his eyebrows pressed together and bringing a hand up to chew his thumbnail.

"Hm." He scrolls and scrolls. "Uh oh."

"Rich?" Eddie sits up, looking so concerned Richie almost gives the whole thing up. He pulls Richie's hand away from his teeth with a gentle grip against his forearm.

"It says I have a terminal case of big dick-itis."

"Oh my god!" Eddie screeches and punctuates a not very gentle punch to

Richie's chest with a shout of his name. His shoulders droop, though, and he starts to laugh when Richie does, disbelief all over his face. "Thought you were 'just proportional', dumbass."

His voice dips in his impression of Richie, mocking him without thinking twice about doing it. It makes Richie laugh like a buffoon, snorting like an idiot for having his own words thrown back in his face.

"No, okay, I'm good, see?" He struggles as he giggles, but pushes his phone into Eddie's face and scrolls through the long list of [NEGATIVE]s.

Eddie squeaks and pushes Richie's hand away. "You don't have to show me! Your medical reports are private!"

"What?" Richie shoots a look at his phone and back to Eddie. "Who cares? I don't care."

The difference in Eddie's mood is notable during dinner. Richie hadn't necessarily noticed that Eddie was tense before, or he had attributed it to work without thinking too deeply about it, but he's much more relaxed with their results in hand. It makes Richie feel better, too. Knowing Eddie feels more comfortable and, hopefully, safe.

It's nice to brush their teeth side by side again, too, even if it was only a few nights apart in reality. Richie fears he's become too addicted to being near Eddie, bordering too dangerously close to dependent, but he doesn't know if he cares. It's hard to care when they're sharing a blanket on Eddie's squeaky leather couch, more out of the desire to than the need, Eddie's place is much less drafty than Richie's is. Watching fat snowflakes fall outside of the big windows from their warm little space together.

Eddie is restless when they climb into bed, fidgeting and sighing and weird.

He gets even shiftier when Richie asks him if something is wrong.

"No," he insists. "I'm just- do you wanna-" His eyes twitch like they're scared to settle in any one location for too long, over Richie's shoulder, his face, his body.

"Oh." Richie waggles his eyebrows wildly. "Do you wanna?"

"I asked, didn't I?" Eddie snaps. Richie doesn't know what it implies about

him that Eddie being mean gives him genuine butterflies, but he chooses to hold off on looking too deeply into it.

“I don’t know, you haven’t really asked anything.”

Eddie kisses him and mumbles ‘annoying’ against his lips before biting at his lower lip. If it’s meant as punishment, it accomplishes nothing to deter Richie from being annoying ever again. Not if being annoying gets Eddie with a good day of scruff kissing him roughly into one of his snobby expensive pillows. He considers telling Eddie this, but then his fingers find the hem of Richie’s pajama pants and slide along the skin there finding hold at his hip, and he’s too distracted to remember his thought.

He mirrors that touch, only his thumb slots perfectly into the line of Eddie’s hip, and he definitely makes some kind of horrible noise about it. Eddie doesn’t seem to care, panting heatedly into Richie’s mouth.

Eddie’s arm brushes Richie’s as he shifts his weight to slide a hand into his pants. Richie can’t see it, still hidden by blankets, but he can feel the slow motion of Eddie’s arm in the barely there tickle of arm hair against his forearm. Slowly, gently, Richie wraps the hand not currently holding tight to Eddie’s hip around Eddie’s slowly moving fist over his thin pants.

“This okay?” It’s a miracle he can speak, his mouth is so dry. He keeps his touch light, awkward in the angle as he lays on his side, staying far far away from restraining.

“Yeah,” Eddie confirms, punched out.

He can’t feel anything, not even skin to skin, and yet somehow he’s never been more turned on in his life. Something about the tendons of Eddie’s hand flexing under his thumb, how he can feel where his grip is held a bit looser, how his fingers shift their grip. Feeling exactly what Eddie likes best right in his own hand, like a schematic he wants to memorize for his own use later.

His thumb twitches, digging into Eddie’s hipbone, the phantom need to swipe over the head of his cock and feel if he’s wet there.

“Richie.” His name on a sigh out of Eddie’s mouth has quickly become one of his favorite sounds.

Richie's straining at his pants, desperately needy but unwilling to move either of his hands away from Eddie's body for even a moment. Eddie's eyes slide open, endlessly deep and black, and Richie attaches himself to his stubbled jaw line just to avoid feeling so watched.

"Eddie." He nips at Eddie's earlobe just to feel him jump. "Can I blow you?"

Eddie's hand freezes for a moment, fully shocked out of the rhythm they'd found. Shit. Richie had not meant to say that out loud. He ruined it. He feels Eddie's fingers flex beneath his.

"You want to do that?" He asks.

"Yeah." Richie almost laughs, some days it feels like it's all he can think about. "That okay?"

"Yeah." Eddie's Adam's apple bobs and his eyes follow, a glance at Richie's lips. "I've thought about it."

His words blow through Richie like ice in his veins. Eddie's thought about it.

"You touch yourself thinking about it?" He has to know, it would eat him alive if he never asked and was left to wonder.

Eddie nods, cheeks glowing so red it must burn, but he doesn't look away. He can feel Eddie's fingers flex again, like he's struggling not to move, and it has him twitching in his pants.

"Me too," he says. He watches Eddie's eyebrows twitch in surprise.

He kisses Eddie again, pleased when the hand not currently inside his pants wraps up around his shoulders. His hands wander to the elastic waist of Eddie's pants, not pulling, but touching. Eddie licks into his mouth and his hands join Richie's, sliding his pants over his hips.

Richie shifts, taking half the blanket with him when he slides down over the bed. He takes his time kissing at Eddie's hip bone and sucking a mark into the very top of his thigh. Eddie makes a choked off noise that grabs Richie's attention, pulls his gaze to where Eddie has an arm folded over his eyes.

"You with me?" Richie asks. While it is a massive distraction, being this close to Eddie's dick and not even touching it yet, he also knows his tendency to vanish inside his own head at times. This is not a time he wants Eddie to be buried in rushing thoughts.

Eddie grunts but doesn't otherwise move.

Lifting away from Eddie isn't easy, but it must be done. Richie moves so he's straddling Eddie, hovering above him, lifting Eddie's arm away from his eyes.

"Eds," he starts. He waits for eye contact. "You with me?"

"Yes, I'm-" Eddie blows out a long breath. "Yes."

Richie kisses him, a series of quick, simple, reassurances. "You sure?"

"Yes, geez." Eddie rolls his eyes. "You don't have to coddle me."

He scoffs, loud and annoying, knowing it will annoy Eddie especially. Kisses Eddie's neck as he moves back down to where he was, kisses his hip again.

"It's called being considerate, asshole."

The huff of a laugh out of Eddie twists suddenly into a gasp when Richie punctuates his statement by licking firm across the head of his cock. He pauses for only a second before leaning in and taking Eddie into his mouth.

To say Eddie is responsive would be putting it lightly. He's loud. Sighing and moaning and swearing like nothing else. When they've jerked off together, or even when they're just kissing, Eddie almost never stops talking. It knocks Richie flat, normally, Eddie running his mouth about his wants and his thoughts. Now, though, his few attempts at saying anything stumble and turn into garbled nonsense until he just gives up. It makes Richie feel like he's going to fall apart, like his bones are vibrating inside of his body like a tuning fork and he's going to collapse into pieces like one of those wooden dolls held together by rope. Has him wrapping a fist around himself and matching stroke for stroke to Eddie in his mouth.

He's tense, almost beyond what Richie had been kind of expecting. His

hips strain to hold still and his hands grab fistfuls of his blanket, fingers flexing and tensing so tight it looks like he could tear right through them. Richie reaches out with the hand not shoved in his own pants, previously moving restlessly between grabbing Eddie's ass and hip and the base of his cock in a never ending loop, and finds one of Eddie's straining hands. Their fingers intertwine, holding tight.

Richie pulls Eddie's hand in close, guiding his fingers to feel where Richie's cheeks are hollowed out around him.

"Fuck, Richie." Like whatever level of restraint Eddie had been using to keep his hands in his blankets is broken, his other hand rushes to touch as well. It finds grip on his shoulder, fingers splayed, and Richie has a flash memory of Eddie grouchy admitting that his broad shoulders turn him on. "Your mouth."

He sounds so slutty, it's too much for Richie's brain to even comprehend. He wraps his free hand around Eddie again, twisting loose and wet.

"I'm- Rich, I-" Wherever his thought was trying to go, it's sent off into a wild stutter when Richie pulls in close and hums an encouraging 'mhm' with Eddie deep in his throat.

A final heaving breath and Eddie's fingers pulling roughly in his hair is it, for him. He twitches in Richie's mouth and comes with a sound Richie will never allow himself to forget, the muscles in his thighs working right there in Richie's peripherals. Richie follows him in no time at all, before he's even caught his breath, moaning wetly into the crease of his hip.

Everything is still.

Eddie's breathing slows.

Eddie jolts like he's been electrocuted.

"Oh!" He shouts, scaring Richie half to death. "Do you need- sorry- come here."

Richie does move when Eddie slightly manhandles him, but is shifty eyed when he replies. "No, I already..."

Eddie's eyes bug out of his head, he looks down at Richie like he might

discover that he's lying.

"You make really hot sounds, okay?" Richie barks, defensive. Like he's just supposed to not come with Eddie pulling at his hair and saying his name and moaning like he's getting paid to do it.

It's demanded that he brush his teeth again, and he needs to clean up anyway, so he slaps his bare feet across the cold wood floor to Eddie's bathroom with a real pep in his step. If he could physically manage to whistle and brush his teeth at the same time, he'd be doing that, too. He tosses the boxers he was wearing into Eddie's laundry and slides back into his sweatpants without bothering to replace them.

He'd half expected Eddie to be passed out when he got back to bed, but he's awake and calm, ready with open arms when Richie folds himself back under his blankets.

"No one's done that to me since college," Eddie confesses in the dark.

The knowledge awakens like, some kind of demon inside of Richie. Something huge and swirling and possessive and honestly a little bit frightening.

"Babe." He's all winks and eyebrows, a big suggestive cartoon character. "I'll do it every day if you let me. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner."

"Come on," Eddie groans, pained.

"Really!" He insists. "Good source of protein, I hear."

Eddie groans even louder in unfiltered disgust. "You don't need protein, you need fiber." At Richie's blank look, he elaborates. "Vegetables, dumbass."

Falling asleep, Richie wonders to himself if it'd be weird to thank Eddie for everything. For letting him suck him off, yeah, but for trusting him to do it, for trusting him enough to be loud about it. For even being willing to still put up with him and stick with him months later. He can imagine Eddie getting flustered about it and getting snappy in that way he gets when he doesn't know what else to be.

He's asleep before he can make a decision though, which is decision

enough for him.

xxxxx

Richie wakes up alone, which isn't a complete shock, not with how particular Eddie is about waking up and getting started with his day. He takes his time in bed checking his phone, sending emails that are probably not nearly as official as any that Eddie tends to send. He adds some newly confirmed dates in Jersey to his calendar and a few early-concept jokes into his notes so he doesn't forget them, only putting his phone down when his growling stomach becomes too demanding.

Eddie is tapping at his laptop when Richie moseys out of his bedroom in a lazy trail to Eddie's side. He kisses his forehead and asks if he's eaten, then graciously announces his plans to make Eddie the most delicious breakfast any human has ever provided for their boyfriend. Eddie agrees that the scrambled eggs are very good even as he scowls at Richie for covering his in ketchup.

He hums to himself while he does the dishes after, aimless nonsense mixed with the one and only part of a new song he heard last week that he can remember. Eddie doesn't seem bothered, too busy muttering at his computer screen with his eyebrows furrowed angrily, he clicks once ferociously and pushes his middle finger directly against the screen. Richie snorts and keeps on humming and mumbling the next song in his head.

"Seriously?" Eddie calls across the room. When Richie looks up, his ears and cheeks are burning red. "Are you humming Like a Prayer?"

It takes Richie a second to click back through the song in his head and he realizes with a loud bark of laughter that yes, he was humming Like a Prayer.

"What can I say, Eds?" He leans on an elbow to get a better angle toward Eddie. "You inspire me."

He blows Eddie again during his lunch hour. One minute annoying him by singing 'down on my knees, I wanna take you there' and in the very next actually down on his knees on the hard kitchen linoleum.

It's different in the daylight, in the middle of his open apartment with nothing hidden in the dark. That line in his hip where Richie's thumb had caught yesterday is somehow still more defined than he'd thought. He traces his fingers over it again and again, down to the dark mark he'd made on Eddie's thigh that stands out deep in the pale skin there. He tells Eddie his dick is pretty just to see him blush. Not that it's untrue, it is, but his motivations in saying it aren't exactly pure.

Eddie's just as loud as he was last night and significantly less shy about putting his hands all over Richie, grabbing his hair, his tshirt, his forearm. He chokes out Richie's name everytime he swallows around him leaking and babbles when Richie winds both hands around his hips and pulls in close and hot. It seems to surprise him, almost, when he comes, like he hadn't noticed at all the telltale signs in his breath and his thighs and the twitching of his cock the way Richie had noticed all of them.

He hauls Richie to his feet and wraps his left hand around his erection, fingers shaky from either nervous energy or orgasm, Richie can't tell. The first couple strokes he makes are stilted and awkward and they feel like heaven, knees weak from the idea that Eddie is touching him at all. Then Eddie shifts, finds his grip, and twists his wrist just right and Richie is curling forward. He does it again and Richie comes apart gasping against Eddie's collarbone.

He stays there for a long while, unwilling to move or look at Eddie yet. He's just about found his phrasing on a joke about being a two pump chump but Eddie breaks the silence before he can get to it.

"You know I don't actually expect you to do that every day, right?" He asks.

"You know I still would, right?" Richie bats back.

He catches Eddie staring at his left hand in something like wonder as he scampers away to brush his teeth and put on actual human clothes while he's at it. He knows the feeling, though, and he wants to scramble back to kiss him breathless as quickly as he can.

They spend a good portion of the afternoon side by side. Eddie moves away from the small desk he has set up and Richie lays across the couch with his head in his lap after a pinky promise to not be a distraction. He

fucks around on his phone to the sound of Eddie mumbling about someone named Barbara who, by the tone of Eddie's voice, is an idiot.

It takes Richie a very long time to leave in order to make it home for dinner with Stan and Bev on time. Dawdling for an eternity at the front door with his tongue in Eddie's mouth and Eddie's hands in his hair. He gets called insufferable at dinner no fewer than five times and whines that Eddie isn't there to defend his honor, aware without a doubt that Eddie wouldn't disagree anyway.

All said and done, Eddie only gets to work from home for a week before his usual train line is open again and he returns to his office. He keeps the spare key Richie had given him, though, and will sometimes show up at Richie's after work unannounced like he owns the place and it's the greatest thing. If he had to be completely honest, Eddie would never leave again if he had any say in things. He doesn't say anything about it. Too aware that it's too much, too soon, too overwhelming. But he allows himself to think about it and drowns in the warmth of it, nothing scary about the nervous squirming in his gut when he does.

Notes for the Chapter:

I lost count of how many times I listened to like a prayer while writing this to find the right mood, like a million? something like that.

I have more of this au planned! But another au is coming to light too, soon I hope. A couple weeks for the first part, bc as much as I want to be a person who posts REALLY LONG one shots I guess I'm just a chapter kinda girl now.

UHHH like thanks everyone for the really kind comments up til now, you've all touched my heart I never expected any of it. AGAIN behaemoth @ tumblr, I am boring but I am chatty

Author's Note:

I am still behaemoth @ tumblr